

SANITARY COMMISSION.

No. 39.

THIRD REPORT

CONCERNING THE

Aid and Comfort given by the Sanitary Commission

TO

SICK SOLDIERS PASSING THROUGH WASHINGTON.

BY FREDERICK N. KNAPP,
SPECIAL RELIEF AGENT.

WASHINGTON, *March 21, 1862.*

TO FRED. LAW OLMSTED,

Secretary Sanitary Commission.

SIR: My last report bore date of October 21. Since that time to the present, the work upon our hands has steadily increased. More room, more money, more time, more medical attendance, have all been demanded. Fewer new regiments have arrived of late, but the regiments already in the field having become more generally acquainted with our plans for rendering help, are now in the habit of sending directly to our care sick and discharged men, who come to the city from the various regimental hospitals to obtain their pay and to start for home.

During the last two months, quite a number of men have been sent to us thus, even from the more distant regiments

at Poolsville and at Budd's Ferry, with letters from their surgeons, or other officers, requesting us to receive them and render them such assistance as they might demand. These men frequently reach here just at night, and are much exhausted, and need, peculiarly, the shelter and the helping hand which we give to them.

A large number of men have also come to us from the hospitals at Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Annapolis. These hospitals receive by hundreds the convalescents from the general hospitals in and around Washington. When these convalescents are well enough to join their regiments, or else, while partially recovered, they are so far diseased as to call for their discharge from the service, they return to Washington, all needing more or less care; some of them almost entirely helpless.

At different dates, we have received twenty-five and and thirty at a time, who come on thus from these hospitals with their papers of discharge. They are, of course, men who need protection and care; but they have no claim upon any provision for such special assistance, excepting that which we furnish to them. Some of these men, returning with their discharge papers, have been very weak, and, without the help and protection which they received from us, they must inevitably have been exposed to much suffering.

Another class of men who have claimed our sympathy and help has been the returned prisoners from Richmond. These returned prisoners have usually been detained in the city a week or more before all their necessary pay rolls, furloughs, or discharges could be made out. During that time, we have taken care of all among them who were sick or wounded. Thus, from these we have had 75 or 100 men at a time.

Again: we have been called upon to receive at the Home many of those referred to in my last report, as constituting a new class, viz: men belonging to regiments ordered to move from Washington to Annapolis or elsewhere on special service. These regiments, after they have struck their tents, come to the railroad station, bringing with them many men who are too sick to bear, without great risk, the exposure while waiting, as they almost unavoidably are obliged to do, some hours before moving on in the cars.

These four classes of men, added to those who are furnished by the newly-arrived regiments, and those who are picked up wandering in the streets or found in the guard-house, needing help, constitute the list of soldiers who have had the shelter of the Home. The following are some of the figures taken from our record book: Number of different men received from October 21 to present date, (March 21,) 3,685; number of "night's lodging" furnished, 9,944; number who have received medical treatment from the surgeon in charge, (Dr. Grymes,) 2,544; number of those received at the Home afterwards sent to general hospital, 172; number of men discharged from the service, and on their way to their homes, who have been here, 983; number of deaths in this time at the Home, 2; number of garments and blankets used and distributed to those who were inmates here, or were found at the depot, in need of such supplies, 7,796.

Amount of money expended since October 21, for direct use in this branch of the Commission, \$2,480.

The smallest number of men who have been in the Home any night is 11; the largest number any night, 130. Often, for a week at a time, the daily number will be 80. One

week the daily average was over 100. During the last eight weeks, the average number lodged has been each night 71. On a given night, there were but 17 in the Home, and the following night there were 118. In order to be prepared to accommodate comfortably this larger number of invalid soldiers, who might at any time come in upon us, it was found necessary to make additional provision. For this purpose, at our request, Government furnished for our use two large-sized portable houses, in addition to one furnished by the proprietors themselves, (Skillings & Flint, of Boston, Mass.) These houses are admirably suited to the purpose for which we use them. They are easily warmed, well lighted, and thoroughly ventilated. These three portable houses, standing near the building we had previously used, will accommodate, comfortably, sixty additional men.

For the purposes of special relief, a portable house has also been placed, at the expense of the Commission, on 17th street, near the office of the Paymaster who settles the accounts of discharged soldiers.

It was found that, owing to the large number of discharged soldiers who daily gathered at this office, it was often impossible, with all the diligence used, for part of the men to be paid off until late in the day. Meantime, these invalid soldiers, being generally men who had just come out of hospitals, general or regimental, became exceedingly exhausted. Not unfrequently, also, men would arrive at too late an hour to have their papers handed in upon that day, and they were thus obliged, without money or friends, to find a place to stay overnight. Or, again, some defect in their papers rendered it necessary for these men to return to their regiment to have the error corrected,

and yet it was impossible for them to go until the next morning. This necessity of finding, at some rate, food and lodging, subjected the sick soldiers to the imposition of men who were ready to take advantage of their situation. An examination into a number of cases revealed the fact that repeatedly these soldiers had been thus obliged to pawn their blankets or clothes for their lodging, to be redeemed at an exorbitant price the next day after they had received their pay.

In order to guard these men against exposure to such imposition, and for the purpose of furnishing a convenient resting place for the more feeble, and a table close at hand where all who were waiting could obtain food, it was deemed advisable to have a suitable house where the Commission could render this service. It was important to have this place as near as possible to the office of the Paymaster; and as no vacant building or part of one could be obtained in the vicinity, one of the portable houses was put up at a cost of about \$200. An unoccupied spot was fortunately found for the building on 17th street.

In this house all that is necessary for comfort is provided; and there are berths where 32 men can be accommodated. The man who looks after the place is able to give the soldiers any needed information in regard to their papers and their journey home; and he also furnishes to the discharged soldiers whatever flannels and blankets are needed for their better protection.

The Paymaster (Major McClure) has very cordially co-operated with the Commission in this endeavor to relieve and help these invalid soldiers. On an average, since this house was opened, some 40 or 45 men per day have been in for rest and food. The number accommodated here for the

night averages from 14 to 16 ; while one night there were 41 who were sheltered here and fed. There were three days last week during which 440 invalid soldiers were fed here. The advance of the army sent in an unusual number to be discharged as unfit for service.

During the last three months, frequent calls have been made upon us for assistance by soldiers honorably discharged, (on account of disability,) but who either have had no money or else only partly enough to carry them home. They are men who, now that they are discharged, have little or else nothing coming to them from Government, because, having drawn clothing at an average cost of say \$38 or \$40, and having been in service but a few months, the allowance for clothing, \$3 50 per month, covers but a small part of what is charged against them, and the balance has to come out of what is allowed for "pay due" and "pay for travelling and subsistence."

Had these same men not been disabled by sickness, they would have been obliged to draw but little more clothing during the year, and the year's allowance would become \$42.

Their back pay amounts to but little, for they have generally received all that is due them up to the first of the previous month, and have sent it home or otherwise disposed of it. In most instances they have sent it home.

So they are left adrift. Government has fulfilled its contract, and cannot furnish them free passes, except in special cases, lest it thereby expose itself to fraud or encourage men to neglect making provision for such a contingency.

But the fact remains. Here are these men, away from home, and without means to get there ; most of them sick,

some very sick. If their lack of money has arisen from any fault of theirs, it is almost invariably the fault of ignorance.

The course which I adopt in regard to these men is this : I inform myself, by examining their papers of discharge at the Pay Office, that the men are destitute owing to causes not in their own control—that is, that they have not received their pay and spent it. Next, that there is no one able to furnish them money upon whom they could reasonably call for it. Then, no such help being at hand, I take them to the cars and buy a ticket for them to their homes, first seeing that they are comfortably provided with clean flannels, &c. If a man is very sick, so that he evidently needs support and care, I engage some trustworthy person travelling to the same point to see him safely returned to his home. And where no such fellow-traveller is found who is willing to take the responsibility, some reliable person in the employ of the Commission is sent expressly to deliver the sick man to his friends.

Previously to our helping them, (as I afterward found,) some poor discharged soldiers had been waiting in this place many days and weeks trying to collect the means to get home. They were men whom we did not happen to get hold of when they were discharged. But now, with our new "Lodge" near the Paymaster's office, we are informed of the condition of almost all who present their papers there.

The amount of relief which has thus been given by this new method of action, I am confident, has been great, and the money expended well applied. It is something more than bestowing food and clothing, or alleviating pain—it is relieving a mental anxiety. Some of the saddest men I

have seen have been those who, discharged from service, sick or broken down, finding themselves far away from home, with no visible means of getting there, have stood asking what they could do. And some of the most grateful men I have ever seen have been those same persons, when I have said to them, "we will buy tickets for you; you shall start in this next train."

During the last few weeks we have had occasion thus to render assistance to more than sixty men. Many letters have been received from these men after they have reached their friends, showing, in their simple words, how much larger the kindness was to them than the money it cost indicated.

The expense of this branch of our relief, since December 1, has been about six hundred dollars. (This is included in the total above named.)

The same general plan has been pursued, as heretofore, to make sure of finding all who arrived at the Station-house needing assistance—men who were not so sick as to give them a claim upon the general hospital, or else whose regiments (but recently in camp) were not yet prepared with the shelter and comfort of a regimental hospital. Some responsible person is at the Station-house whenever a regiment arrives, whether it is night or day, who selects and takes up to the Home all who need care.

An arrangement has also been made with some of the hospitals for convalescents at Annapolis and Baltimore, by which we are informed of the intended arrival here of any men who are returning to Washington to obtain papers of discharge.

The plan has likewise been continued by which the faithful surgeon in charge of the Home, Dr. Grymes, besides

his labors at the house, performs the ordinary duty of regimental surgeon for regiments or parts of regiments who come on without a surgeon in charge, so long time as they remain near the railroad station. There have been thousands of men sent on in parts of regiments that have thus claimed medical treatment.

Such is a general statement of the means used for special relief during the last few months.

I will now refer to a few of the details of the work by copying here and there a day's record from the brief journal which is kept.

"SUNDAY EVENING, *December 1, 1861.*—The 8th Regiment of New York Cavalry arrived last night, with a large number of men sick with the measles; some very sick. Forty were brought up here in the night, and nine more this morning. Just at daybreak one of them died; he was too far gone when brought here in the night to allow medical skill to be of any avail. His body to-day has been embalmed, to be sent to his friends. Ambulances have been obtained, and twenty-two of the men most seriously sick have been sent to the general hospital. A few days of care and rest will be all that the others need. There are seventy-one in the Home to-night."

"DECEMBER 8 —The New York 89th Volunteers arrived to-day; seventeen of them were brought here, of whom two were sent to the general hospital. Twenty-one men, who have been here the last few days waiting for their regimental hospital to be finished, were to-day sent to their camps. Dr. Grymes has to-day examined and prescribed for thirty-three in the Home; some of whom are quite sick, but doing well. There are sixty-four here to-night."

“SUNDAY, *December 15.*—There were but thirty-five here last night; it is comparatively quiet to-day; all will be glad to rest; it has been a busy week; last Sunday there were nearly sixty here; many of the men to-day are writing letters home. We send from this house, upon an average, about thirty-five letters per day to the post office. Two or three of the men have gone to the church near by. To-day Dr. Grymes has taken an ambulance and been himself with Williams out to his regiment, to consult with the surgeon there who may know more about his case; but it is decided best to bring Williams back again; his disease seems to be nothing but homesickness with general debility. He is a mere boy, of about eighteen, from a New Jersey regiment; he has been here since December 5. He evidently struggles to be manly and brave, but this homesickness has become a real disease, which masters him. We have thus frequent opportunity here in the Home to make note of what in the general excitement is almost unavoidably overlooked, and which yet it is worth while to have borne in mind while we are seeking to aid and strengthen our soldiers—namely, what a vast amount there is in the hearts of these soldiers of personal sacrifice, daily struggle to put down anxious feelings which might enervate the man, tender thoughts of home checked in their utterance, and hope silently waiting. The sum and the costliness of all this can never be estimated, and will never be recorded; yet, taken in the aggregate in the camps of these five hundred thousand men who have left their Northern and Western homes, the total is immense.”

“DECEMBER 16.—Our Sunday quiet did not continue long, for though we had but about thirty in the Home last evening, we found seventy-three here this morning. The 57th

regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers arrived at the Station in the night. There were none among them very ill, but many who needed care at just this time to prevent serious sickness. The surgeon of the regiment selected forty-one of his men and brought them up to the Home, and himself remained, together with the hospital steward, through the night to take care of them."

"DECEMBER 19.--To-day forty-two new men have come in, many of them needing medical treatment. Nine are from Harris' Light Cavalry, thirty-three are from the 1st Vermont Cavalry. In this newly-arrived Vermont regiment there was an unusually large number sick, as they had been confined to the close cars several days in their long journey from Northern Vermont; and, too, there were in this regiment many who illustrate what we continually observe, viz: such an earnest desire on the part of convalescents not to be left behind at home, that they insist upon coming on with their fellow-soldiers when they are not really in a fit state to bear the excessive fatigue and exposure. This 1st Vermont Cavalry reached Washington last night about midnight. Instead of coming in to the Station-house, as is usual, and where we were waiting for them to arrive, they were left a mile or a mile and a half out, because this was the most convenient place for taking the horses from the cars, and near to the spot where the cavalry were to encamp, north of the Capitol. The sick men were all in a car by themselves, which ought to have been run in to the Station-house, but owing to some carelessness, it was left where the train stopped.

"This morning, when we went out to see what had become of the sick, we found them all seated upon their knapsacks or lying upon their blankets on the ground, in the

midst of baggage and horses. It seems that the passenger car in which the sick men were left was needed, and they had been turned out a mile from the depot, with no shelter or possible provision for their comfort, and no food but what they had carried for four days in their haversacks. We found that the surgeon had just gone in to seek some assistance, but we had not met him. We immediately sent for ambulances, and carried all the sick (thirty-three) in to the Home, the Colonel himself, with kind care, assisting with his own hands each man into the ambulance. One of the surgeons of the regiment and the hospital steward are here now helping to take care of the men. There are seventy-five inmates to-night."

"DECEMBER 25, (Christmas)—The large room has been cleared out, and long tables spread, and a Christmas dinner prepared for all who happened to be here to-day. There were about sixty seated at the tables, and although some of the men were not able to taste what was spread before them, they were all able, as the face of each man showed, to share in the feeling which passed from one to another as they thought of Christmas days at home. And these thoughts of home did not make them weaker, but stronger for enduring hardships, as was manifest from the calm, earnest manner in which they responded to the few words spoken to them, telling them to bear in mind that Christmas day had but half its meaning until we had a country where, literally, freedom, justice, right laws, and all Christian principles were absolute in their control, and inaugurated by the will of the people.

"I cannot but note the example here, in a small way, of what may be seen and ought to be felt working, in an immense way, all through our army, viz: the effect of bringing

together into personal contact, men from all the different parts of the land, blending their thoughts and interests and sympathies in common. For instance, as I took pains to record, we had to-day at our Christmas dinner men from Michigan, Pennsylvania, Maine, Wisconsin, Vermont, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Indiana, and Maryland. To-night there are sixty-one men in the Home.”

“DECEMBER 28.—Last night there were but thirty-six in the house; to-night there are seventy-eight. The New Hampshire 6th regiment arrived to-day, from whom we received thirty men; a number of them are so sick that they will probably have to be sent to the general hospital. Their surgeon is here helping to care for them. We have also received to-day 15 men of the 2d New York Artillery. Some of the other men who have been discharged and obtained their pay, have started for their homes to-day, all comfortably provided with warm flannels.”

“JANUARY 6.—Although last night there were but twenty in the house, and a number have since left, to-night there are 124 here. Toward evening the New Hampshire 6th regiment (which arrived but a few days ago) came in from their camp to the Station, en route to Annapolis. They had struck their tents and brought all their sick with them, (except three, who were sent to the general hospital.) As the cars are not ready to receive these men, they are brought here for the night: there are eighty of them, none very sick, but all needing care and nursing; most of them are men recovering from measles.

“To-night, also, we found in the large building with the soldiers the wives and children of the Regulars, who have just come on from California. We have brought them all

up here and given them one of the small houses to themselves. They seem very grateful for the kindness. There are fifteen women and twenty-nine little children. Now, while this record is made, the three sick men of the New Hampshire 6th regiment, who were sent to the general hospital, are brought in. They say that they have been carried to three different hospitals, but, through some informality in their application for admission, they were not received ; and so now they have followed the regiment and are brought here. The day has been excessively cold and bleak, and they must have suffered much. I am thankful that there is shelter and warmth ready for them."

"JANUARY 7.—There are but thirty here to-night, (not including the children of the California soldiers.) The women and children will remain here a few days, until their husbands can make arrangements elsewhere for them.

"All the New Hampshire men left to-day for Annapolis. The hospital steward received a supply of medicines, enough to serve for a week or two. He stated that a requisition for medicines had been made some days before, but had not yet been answered ; and now they are ordered off for the Burnside expedition destitute of a supply. It may reach them before they sail."

"JANUARY 9.—There are fifty-one in the house to-night ; the larger part of them returned prisoners from Richmond ; they came in to-day ; none of them very sick, as but few of the wounded men came at this time ; but many of them much worn by their long confinement."

"JANUARY 10.—To-day we have supplied the needs of all the returned prisoners who came on from Richmond yesterday. They had not received, with few exceptions, the

garments sent for their use to Richmond by the United States government. Twelve cases of supplies were carried to the Soldiers' Rest, and the men answering to their names, came in order and received each man a blanket, two flannel shirts, (under and upper,) a pair of socks, pair of woolen drawers, handkerchief, and towel. There were about two hundred and seventy men supplied—receiving in all about two thousand articles. These men were then directed to go by companies of forty to the place provided for bathing, where they washed and then put on their clean clothes. The ladies who have placed in our hands these supplies, would have felt repaid for their labor if they could have seen the real comfort which has been given to these returned prisoners to-day."

"JANUARY 18.—This evening one hundred and forty-five more returned prisoners arrived in Washington; they were all men who were wounded, and had been in the hospitals at Richmond; many of them were still suffering much from their wounds. It was the plan of the officer in charge to have some forty or fifty of those who needed most surgical care taken at once from the Station-house to the St. Elizabeth Hospital; but they arrived so late, and the night was so dark, and the roads so bad, that it would have been almost impossible to have taken them there, even if ambulances had been in readiness, (as they were *not*.) Those who most needed care were brought up to the Home (about eighty of them) and made comfortable."

"JANUARY 19, *Sunday Morning* —This forenoon was devoted to returned prisoners by Dr. Grymes and the surgeon who came up in charge of them, dressing their wounds. There were about fifty of them whose wounds required extensive dressing, the others less. In accordance with previous

arrangements, the ambulances came and took to the hospital about forty of the men needing most care. This left us more room ; so that all the other returned prisoners were brought from the Retreat to the Home. To-night we have a house full.

I make the following extract from the record kept by Dr. Grymes :

“ ‘ A surgeon and assistant surgeon in charge were with the returned prisoners, and, as soon as practicable after they arrived, those requiring immediate medical and surgical attention (about seventy-five men) were brought up to the Home, where they were carefully attended to and comfortably bedded—the first time for many of the poor fellows since the 20th of July. * * * * *

The surgeon in charge was delighted that he had found a place where his sick men could be cared for. He stated to me that when he arrived at the Retreat, about 8 o'clock in the evening, all was confusion ; and he did not know what he should do with his sickest men, inasmuch as he saw at a glance that they could not stay there without risking their lives. No one *officially* met him. He had a letter to a surgeon here, but he did not make his appearance, (although it was known they were coming on;) so, with pleasure he accepted the offer of the Home. And on Sunday, after waiting till 12 o'clock for some one to come and take the men, he had to go with them himself to St. Elizabeth Hospital.' ”

“ SUNDAY, January 26 —A beautiful day. The house full. Many of the men writing letters to their friends. On my way down this morning, I went to look up a poor fellow whom I had heard of as being sometimes in the Central guard-house, sometimes wandering about the city. I found

him in a sad state of body and mind. He had apparently had a fever, which had affected his brain and he had strayed off, and was unable to recollect where he belonged or what his regiment was. I took him to the Home, had all his clothes put in a pile and burned, gave him fresh garments, and he is now resting quietly. When I went up stairs to see him this evening, he seemed to have a measure of returning intelligence—his first exclamation as I entered his room was, ‘I do believe you are the man I’ve been looking for who is going to take me home to my mother.’ He afterward was able to recall his name and the number of his regiment; he is from the State of Michigan. There are sixty-eight in the house to-night.”

“JANUARY 31.—During the past twelve days we have averaged about eighty in the house each night. To-day all the returned prisoners that had remained till this time started for home. Day before yesterday the forty sent to St. Elizabeth Hospital were brought here to be near the cars when ready to start. They left here this afternoon. I have been throughout impressed with the marvellous patience of these men; their subdued quiet tone; not arising from a lack of spirit or from a lack of patriotic feeling, but arising, as far as I could judge after a somewhat careful observation, and I think I judged justly, from a settled predetermination to *accept* whatever came to them as one of the conditions of engaging in the work which they had taken their oath to serve. This is not a careless impression on my part; but a judgment. I am more and more impressed with the real thorough tone of earnestness which somehow has got wrought into the hearts of our citizen soldiers. Among these soldiers there will be found, of course, many men who have not caught the spirit of the hour—men

whom no real purpose could ever get hold of, and who seem to deny such statements as I have just made; but these men ought not, by any means, to be taken as exponents of the whole. Determinations, convictions, broader views of the elements and the worth of a nation's life; a more intelligent understanding of the great question which lies back of this whole struggle, and a more thorough interest in human freedom; all these conditions of heart and thought are gradually and even largely showing themselves among our soldiers. When men really suffer in a cause, they begin to ask themselves seriously what the cause is for which they are thus suffering. I make this record because, in daily contact with these men, I have carefully sought to know the truth upon what seemed to me an important point.

“Before these returned prisoners left us for their homes, each one was provided with whatever under garments he needed, and, all who desired them, with blankets.”

“FEBRUARY 1.—Yesterday afternoon a company of regulars arrived from Key West, bringing six women and nine children, whom we have placed in one of the small houses. Last night, in the night, the 76th New York Regiment arrived. Twelve were brought up to the Home, and this morning thirteen more; the larger part of them requiring medical treatment.”

“FEBRUARY 2, *Sunday*.—To-day, still thirteen more additional of the New York 76th have been sent up here, and a number of men returning from Annapolis hospital have come in. There are a great many ill in the house. Dr. Grymes has been hard at work most of the day. There are here to-night three men, whom I chanced to come across just before dark, at the upper part of the city, looking sadly weary—in fact, almost utterly exhausted. They were tediously

toiling their way up to Headquarters for directions. Two of these men, as their papers showed, had been in the hospital sixty days each. This was the first day they had come out, yet they had been sent up from Sickles' Brigade, which is more than forty miles distant. Leaving early in the morning, they had been obliged to hurry off before they could secure a breakfast. They had come without any definite direction being given to them, or a cent of money furnished them by which they could ride from the wharf to the other part of the city, or by which they could pay for food or shelter. One of these men was bent almost double with rheumatism, and every step was pain to him. I record here this evidence of culpable negligence on the part of officers in not providing what the most common humanity would dictate for the comfort of their discharged soldiers, both for the fact itself and to contrast it with the kind care of a captain of the New Hampshire 2d regiment, who a few days ago, after writing to me in advance, detailed one of his most reliable men to take charge of a sick soldier of his company who was coming to Washington—a distance of thirty or forty miles. I put these three soldiers into a carriage and took them to the Home, and I never saw men more truly grateful for rest and help. They will have to remain some days before they can recover from this excessive fatigue. To-night there are eighty in the Home.

“FEBRUARY 5.—Twenty-five more of the New York 76th have come in, needing care; making, in all, who have been here from that regiment, seventy.

“There came here yesterday four discharged soldiers who had no money to carry them to their homes—two of them very weak and sick. We kept them here last night, and in the morning furnished them means to get home. One of

them had been sick nearly three months, and has not long to live. To-day Mr. Rogers has been over the river and obtained the discharge papers for three sick men, who were too weak to go themselves. There are sixty here to-night."

"FEBRUARY 12.—Doubleday's New York Artillery arrived last night in the night, and there were thirty-one of the men brought up here. Only one had to be sent to the general hospital. To-day, I furnished tickets to two more sick soldiers, discharged without pay—one to Pittsburg, the other to Troy, New York. Only forty-five in the house this evening."

"FEBRUARY 21.—Yesterday the 3d United States Cavalry, and to-day the 3d New York Artillery arrived. About forty men have come to the Home from these two regiments to stay; and Dr. Grymes has prescribed for some forty more of the 3d New York, at the Soldiers' Retreat, who needed some care. They had no surgeon with them. This evening, about 8½ o'clock, 350 more returned prisoners arrived; we took all who were sick to the Home. Finding that the others were not well provided with blankets, I had ten cases brought down from the storehouse, and each man of the 350 had, before 10 o'clock, a bed quilt or blanket to sleep upon. This was the more important as they will probably be obliged to remain in the Soldiers' Rest, where there are no beds, for some days while their furloughs are being made out, and other arrangements made with reference to them."

"FEBRUARY 24—Three hundred and fifty more returned prisoners arrived; some of them wounded, a number of them very feeble; four (Massachusetts 15th regiment) are sick with consumption. We receive all that need care.

"I had twelve cases of bed quilts ready in advance at the Station-house, and we furnish all the men. There are eighty in the Home to-night.

"Up at the Lodge, in 17th street, to-day, there were some sixty men fed, and forty are there sleeping to-night. Owing to a public funeral, the Treasury was not open to-day, so all the discharged men who came in for their pay were obliged to wait till the next day. There were sixty-five of them collected at the Paymaster's. All who were not accommodated at the Lodge were put into the omnibus or ambulances and brought down here."

"FEBRUARY 26.—We have to-day made arrangements to facilitate the departure home of those Massachusetts men who are so very sick; two have gone on in charge of a brother, the others with friends. They had a bed provided in a sleeping car.

"Also, to-day, we sent a man to take charge of a sick soldier to New Hampshire; for, without some one to take care of him, the man could not possibly live through the journey; and his anxious desire was to reach home to die."

"MARCH 3.—We received this morning twenty-eight disabled soldiers, who came on from Annapolis Hospital, with their papers of medical discharge complete, but most of them without their descriptive list and pay roll. Their officers are absent on the Burnside expedition. It will be some days, probably, before these men can get their papers arranged so as to obtain their pay and final discharge. This neglect of captains and regimental surgeons to furnish a descriptive list and pay roll to each man who is left behind in hospital, is a source of sad evil and serious delays to these sick men; it is the result of gross and culpable carelessness. I always find, in talking with a body of twenty-

five or thirty discharged soldiers like these here now, that there is among them a real regret at being obliged to leave the service until they have helped to strike the final blow.

“The 103d Pennsylvania regiment brought in a number of men to-day. There are eighty-two in the Home to-night.”

“MARCH 7.—To-day, most of the twenty-eight discharged soldiers, who came from Annapolis on the 3d instant, have left. The chaplain of the Annapolis Hospital, who came on in charge of them, and has rendered efficient service, goes with these men as far as Baltimore to care for them and to buy there for them the railroad tickets to their various homes. This will save the poor fellows much trouble and anxiety. And I will here record the fact, that some of the most practically efficient, as well as earnest workers in the army, have been found among the chaplains of regiments and hospitals. Notwithstanding, it must be confessed, that some of the army chaplains, in being brought to just this necessity of dealing with real men every day, have given peculiar emphasis to the fact, that a miserably poor thing are priestly robes and Sunday services unless joined to a spirit and a hand which take hold of the actual work of helping men who need assistance. We have sent home four more men to-day who had no means whatever at hand.

“To-day, the 92d New York regiment arrived in Washington. We found among them about thirty who were too sick to be exposed. We took these up to the Home. It is a real refreshment to see with what gladness these sick soldiers, wearied with a long journey, accept the invitation to go to a house where they can find a bed and some of the attentions and comforts of a home. To-day, also,

the 81st New York regiment arrived, and the 12th United States Infantry, filling every spot around the Station-house full of armed men, and bringing in to us about twenty-five more who need medical treatment and care. Every place is full to-night. There are one hundred and thirty in the house, sleeping here."

"MARCH 8.—This has been a busy day. The 14th United States Infantry, the 93d New York Volunteers, the 5th New York Cavalry, and the 98th New York Volunteers, all arrived since last night. From these various regiments about sixty men have been brought in to us. Dr. Grymes has examined them all, and prescribed for most of them.

"Fortunately, many of the men who were here yesterday went to their camps or regimental hospitals to-day; still we have over a hundred in the house to-night. A few of these men are quite sick, but most of them need only a few days of rest and medical treatment.

"I was called early this morning by the police to look after some of the returned prisoners, who, it seems, when paid off and furloughed the other day, instead of going directly to their homes, had remained behind and been spending their time and money in the drinking saloons. It has been our special aim, knowing the temptations here, to see that all these returned prisoners, as soon as paid and furloughed, immediately took passage on the cars; but among so many men, and amid such confusion, some escape us. I found these three men in a cheap lodging-house; one of them was already dead, another very sick, and the third suffering with delirium. The last two were immediately sent to the hospital. The body of the other man, after proper medical examination and certificate, was respectably buried. From papers found in his pocket he was readily

identified; and I have to-night written to his parents, informing them of his death. He had in his possession letters from his parents, received by him while in the prison at Richmond. They were full of home-like tenderness. Thus he died, by this worst of enemies, after he had passed unharmed through a battle and through months of imprisonment. One of the other two men cannot live many days."

"MARCH 10.—To-day the 101st New York, and the 107th Pennsylvania, and 100th New York regiments reached Washington. From these three regiments we took about forty-seven men to the Home. A number of them will have to be sent to the general hospital. There have also been brought in to us some twenty other men from parts of regiments that have arrived; so that to-night again Dr. Grymes is hard at work, and the house is very full."

"MARCH 11.—Some sixty-five of the 1st Vermont Cavalry came on to-day from Annapolis. They were sick there when the regiment moved, and were left behind. We took from these as large a number as we could accommodate, (thirty,) selecting those most needing care. To-night there are one hundred and ten in the house."

The record of the past two weeks is a continuation of the previous fortnight. A vast number of troops have arrived at the Station-house; and it has been in our power to afford "aid and comfort" in a corresponding measure. During that time the average number that we have cared for has been a hundred and more each day at this house, and forty each day at the house on 17th street. It is worthy of note, that during the past month, when there has been constantly such a house full of men, few of them sick enough to subject them to the more severe restraints which fitly connect themselves with hospital treatment, there has scarcely been

an instance of disregard of the rules of gentleness and propriety. This tells well for our American soldiers, taken from the masses of the people.

With reference to the character of the diseases of the men who come under our care, I will simply quote a sentence from my last report; inasmuch as further observation confirms the view there given:

“* I should say that at least three-quarters of the discharged men, composing one-third of the whole whom we receive, are persons who, according to their own testimony, were more or less diseased before they left their homes, and who would never have been allowed to enlist except for the culpable carelessness of the medical officers who inspected these same men before their enlistment. I have taken special care to inform myself upon this point, so far as I could from the opportunity afforded me of talking with six or eight hundred discharged men. At one time we had nineteen discharged men from one regiment, and it was their united testimony that ‘the surgeon who examined them as recruits passed them off at the rate of a company of ninety men in an hour.’” The attention of public officials who have this matter in charge ought surely to be drawn to these facts. By such carelessness private homes suffer, the public service suffers, and the good name of the army, as a place where the health of the soldier is cared for, suffers. It is a wrong all around.

“With reference to other men who come under our care—not discharged, but belonging to newly-arrived regiments—I should say that one-half of these are men who ought never to have been allowed to enlist, while the other half is made

* Second Report, page 21.

up chiefly of men who, though ill when the regiment was called upon to move, could not bear to be left behind, and therefore undertook a journey which was too severe for them. But such men usually are ready for service after a few days' rest.

"There are but few persons who come into our hands affected with contagious or infectious disorders, or threatened with protracted sickness of the severer types of disease; but when any such arrive, they are immediately placed under the better care which they receive at the general hospitals."

The same surgeon as when I last reported to you (Dr. Grymes) remains in charge, with a continuance of the same unwearied zeal and faithfulness which had previously made his services so acceptable and so valuable.

Mr. J. B. Clark, who has been the acting superintendent at the house the past five months, has been obliged, by other duties, to return to his home. He has labored constantly, patiently, and freely. His place is now filled by Mr. A. A. Abbott, who gives us his services without charge, and has entered diligently upon his labors.

Mrs. Murry continues her services with the same kindly and painstaking care. And I believe that all others, who have been connected with the labors of the Home, have given something more than time and strength to the work—have had a real interest in the soldiers themselves, who have been sheltered here.

I will turn to one point of practical detail. I am glad to be able to report that much more liberal provision has been recently secured for the accommodation of regiments at the railroad station. It is the improvement which we have previously urged. A short time since the excessively crowded

and unwholesome state of these buildings for the reception of troops induced us to make a detailed report of the inconveniences and dangers growing out of it, and the absolute demand for larger accommodation. This report was transmitted to the Quartermaster's Department, and General Meigs immediately gave orders, without a day's delay, for erecting larger buildings. New barracks have been put up within the last three weeks, which will accommodate 1,000 men, and an additional room for serving rations is now being built; so that instead of 300 men, 800 can be fed at one time. Some days recently there have been 9,000 meals to be served to newly-arrived regiments or to those leaving by railroad, and the embarrassment and confusion caused by want of sufficient room was great. This evil is now to be obviated.

I must not close this report, upon the special relief given to our soldiers, without referring, briefly as I may, to the large amount of aid which has been rendered to those needing assistance, by Mr. Henry B. Rogers, an Associate Member of the Commission, and my most constant and valued coadjutor. He has gratuitously devoted his whole winter to the service of such as wanted help. Not a day has passed but has brought not one case, but many cases, where his judicious advice, or timely direction, or helping hand, has saved men from anxiety, exposure, tedious walks, or real suffering. Each individual case claimed, perhaps, but a half-hour or a half-day of thought or time, and seemed not much in itself; but even in each individual case the relief to a sick man away from his home, and alone, was not small; and the aggregate of all the pain saved has been greater than any person not cognizant of the variety and the number of these calls could estimate. Could these details be

written out, it would form a record of "aid and comfort" given to our soldiers which would call for the gratitude of all. Neither the Commission nor the soldiers can soon forget the faithful labors of this real friend of them both.

If it were desirable, I could append to this report many letters which have been received from men or parents of men who have been cared for by the Commission and sent to their homes. It was not my purpose to copy any of these letters, but as one comes to my hand from the mail just as I am writing this report, I will insert it.

18TH MARCH, 1862.

MR. KNAPP, *of the Sanitary Commission:*

MY DEAR SIR: You believe, I am sure, that I have forgot your kindness for me when I was in Washington, but I hope these few following words shall show that such is not the case. The reason why I did not write to you before this day is a few accidents (though of little importance) have postponed my arrival in my family as far as some few days ago, and that this is the first occasion for me to thank you and make you know how I get along. As to these thanks, I wish I could write in English like I can do it in French, for I should be so glad to express my gratitude for you in the manner in which I do feel it, but this is impossible to me, so I beg of you, suppose yourself in the position in which I was and be so good as to believe that I feel what you should have felt.

My health is getting a good deal better since I am home, and I take advantage of it to continue my studies. My father asked me to assure you of his gratitude.

Once more, I thank you, and hope you shall not forget your obliged friend,

* * * * *

This is one letter which may be taken as an exponent of a whole class of those we receive; for though many of them are not of equal refinement of thought and style, they all bear witness to refinement of feeling, and tell of real gratitude and a hearty appreciation of the kind bounty of those "loyal women" and men who have placed supplies and money in the hands of the Commission, to be used for our sick and wounded soldiers.

I feel that the demands which are made upon us, and our facilities for doing good were never greater than now, provided the means are still afforded us for continuing the work.

Respectfully,

FRED'K N. KNAPP,

Special Relief Agent of Sanitary Commission.